Grace and peace are yours from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, amen.

Epiphany in the context of the church means, Christ made known. Christ is made known in the miracles that are performed by the Holy Spirit and through the precious gift of faith. Once known, we cannot return to a time or place of ignorance; however, we can (and often do) attempt to hide from our responsibilities that faith brings. With love and tender care, our Lord brings us to a place of service in His Kingdom with all the gifts and blessings we are given.

Our Scripture texts today calls the human existence to consider the very God that created us; it challenges us to be mindful of Almighty God. We have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord; the same God who created the heavens and earth before we came into existence. To truly contemplate this is overwhelming. And still, God desires to be known for His works, His love, and His enduring relationship with His beloved humanity. God expresses His feelings and commitment for a weak, frail, and vulnerable being who days are numbered, yet whose life is promised to be everlasting and full of joy, rest, and peace.

The words of Isaiah are that of God declaring Himself to humankind. God describes His power, authority, and deeds by identifying all that has come into existence. He looks down upon the earth and all that is made and sees all are in need of Him; Him who provides. In the context of human life, we can only begin to comprehend the power and might of our God. We certainly know the power and authority that exists in this world, and all elements that we cannot overcome. God’s word reveals He is the Creator of all that affects and influences us here and now… the very things that make us weary. It is Him alone who will lift us up; if we wait upon Him.

The application of Isaiah’s words comes with understanding that is granted to us through faith, and for many, these words have indeed been experienced. We wait for the Lord. Eventually, all will come to know these words and we know the value of placing our trust in the Lord. The words of Isaiah are also a prologue to our gospel text that reveal strength given to those who serve and are called to serve.

In the Season of Epiphany, we focus on Christ being made known to the Jewish people who are given the Law and Prophets; Jesus is the fulfillment of both the Law and the Prophets. The same way Christ is made known in Scripture is the same way Christ is made known today. To know Christ is to serve the Lord. When we are unable to serve, we wait upon the Lord, which is exactly the story with Peter’s mother-in-law. Again, a little more to this story than meets the eye (at first glance).

The story of healing Peter’s mother-in-law appears in all three synoptic gospels. However, only the Gospel of Luke states that Jesus spoke; the other two gospels only say that Jesus took her by the hand. We have shared before the reality, “if God says is, the Holy Spirit will fulfill it.” So here, we have the Word of God rebuking the fever (according to Luke’s Gospel), and the fever departing from the woman. This is not to say the other gospels are incorrect, but we have a fuller view when combining the accounts.

Another very obvious and intentional condition is presented if we look closely. Jesus and the disciples just left the synagogue, where He was teaching when they arrive at the home of Peter. Jesus heals the woman ON THE SABBATH. This is not allowed under the law, but the woman is restored to health and serves the Lord and those present. Additionally, Jesus touches a person who is ill, who is also said to be unclean under the Law. To touch an unclean person is to also make yourself unclean. Finally, it is the role of the priest to declare that a person is clean before they are to resume their service.

Under the Law and according to what is observed, what Jesus has done could be considered very scandalous, or at least very problematic. But notice the next part of the passage; when evening came, at sunset, people were brought to Jesus for healing. Sunset: when the Sabbath had ended, people came to Jesus and were healed. Jesus has taught and healed on the Sabbath, and then closes the days with tending and caring for those who came to Him. What is made clear in the text is this was a very full day for Jesus.

The next morning, Jesus goes alone to a quiet deserted place, and there He prays. My friends, here is the message for today and the fulfillment of God’s Word. Jesus is fully human and fully divine. As fully human, there is a complete obedience to the word and will of God for Jesus. There is also a need for food, strength, and endurance to accomplish all that God wills for His Son to complete. Jesus knows He must rely upon, depend upon, and trust in God. He knows the power of prayer and He waits.

In the prayers of Jesus, the words of Isaiah are fulfilled, and Jesus’s strength is renewed for the day(s) ahead. We are human and, in this form, we have the same needs that Jesus has, and we look to our God for the same healing, strength, and endurance to continue serving as we are called. Jesus is teaching us today, here and now, how to serve and how to find the strength to see past the powers of this world. Jesus is telling us to look to God, the Creator of all that is, and seek the renewal and healing so we will have the strength to be the support and strength in the lives of those around us and those in our care.

Simply put, we cannot do this on our own just as Jesus did not do this on His own. Jesus relied upon the strength of the Holy Spirit to provide for the human sanity to accomplish God’s will. When we fall victim to believing we do not need to pray and ask God for strength, we convince ourselves that we can do this on our own. We begin to think our issues, problems, and challenges are all manageable within our control. In time, we might even think we have found peace for ourselves, which is just about the time a crisis will arise that reveals it is God alone who can restore our hope and strength.

Prayer, rest, and peace that comes from God is the means to serve in a Kingdom that God has brought to us here and now. To believe that we are loved and cared for in a world of forces and powers that attempt to destroy us in not easy and not something we will figure out for ourselves. However, when we look toward heaven for our strength, not only are the demons cast out that prevents us from serving, but we are also lifted up by our Lord, just as Peter’s mother-in-law was; with the peace that passes all understanding to keep our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord. Amen.